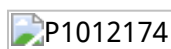


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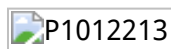
USM-FIG DIRECT COLLABORATES TO PROMOTE COUNTRY'S FIRST FIG INDUSTRY



USM, PENANG, 10 March 2016 – Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Fig Direct to collaborate in the research on tissue culture for fig plants, utilising efficient and effective tissue culture technology to produce quality shoots (plantlets) from the donor plant.

USM researchers, Dr. Chew Bee Lynn and Associate Professor Dr. Sreeramanan from the School of Biological Sciences are actively doing research on fig micropropagation to produce quality shoots (plantlets) in an effort to establish a fig plantation for commercial purposes.

The USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman represented the university in the signing ceremony while Fig Direct was represented by the Director of the company, Robin Lim.

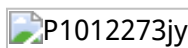


"With this MoA, Fig Direct would supply shoots from the donor plant together with other related items for the research at USM while Biotech Corp authorities would be the intermediary between the industry and the university in realising this effort," said Omar.

He added that, this three-way cooperation would allow the currently available technology to be utilised well, to facilitate the production of figs for the world market in the long run, being the first time such an industry is run on a large-scale, for it to be produced as a food source and also as other fig-based side-products.

Fig Direct is managing the first fig plantation in Malaysia, located at Mukim Temin, Changloon, Kedah.

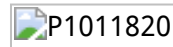
The two-hectare land could accommodate 12,000 fig plants and to begin with, it has successfully planted 6,000 fig plants.



According to Robin, through this collaboration they hope that the local community as well as the Malaysian growers would not just focus on growing the fig shoots through tissue culture, but also to ensure that there would be good yield in the future.

“We also hope that with the increase in the number of fig plantations in the future, the local community would not only reap the benefits of selling fresh figs, but will also be involved in downstream industries such as in the production of jams, juices and soap products based on figs,” said Robin.

He added that local farmers can now venture into the growing of fig trees as a new source of income in view of fig being a high value crop, hence helping to improve the economic well-being of the local community.



The signing of this memorandum was also aimed at establishing close relations between the USM researchers, the industry, with the government and private sectors in raising the production and output of the country's food crops for the local and global markets.

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